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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to provide information about the impact of study abroad on people who had completed the American Institute for Foreign Study's Overseas Learning Program between 1983-1988. The American Institute for Foreign Study contacted 7,500 participants of high school or college educational travel and study abroad during this period. Questions were designed to solicit past participants' opinions concerning college interviewers' as employers' reactions in regard to study abroad and to determine what type of skills participants believe they developed while overseas. The programs in the study included: (1) high school educational travel; (2) high school students' foreign family homestays; (3) college summer programs; and (4) college academic year abroad. Each program is briefly described, and specific percentages are reported for college acceptance, employment, and skills' development data. The document provides selected quotations from educational representatives and survey respondents. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents recommend study abroad for high school and college students, and the study indicates that a period of international education contributed skills, traits, and experiences beneficial to college acceptance and career pursuits. Graphs are included, and the survey is appended. (JHP)

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The Impact of an International Education on College Acceptance and Career Development

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Foreword

As the 21st century approaches, all nations on our planet have become increasingly interdependent. Scientific advancements, business transactions and peace negotiations all occur in a global arena.

To face the future in a global community, today's youth require international awareness, foreign language skills and an understanding and appreciation of each other's culture. International education, therefore, is a vital component to expanding knowledge of the world, improving language ability and cultivating appreciation and compassion for other countries and cultures.

It is the responsibility of our educational system, beginning at the earliest possible time, to lay a foundation upon which our youth can build a successful and rewarding future. Overseas study provides the cornerstone today's students will rely on to understand multinational business, share advancements in technology and communicate among governments as leaders in the next millennium..

Henry C. Kahn, President
American Institute For Foreign Study

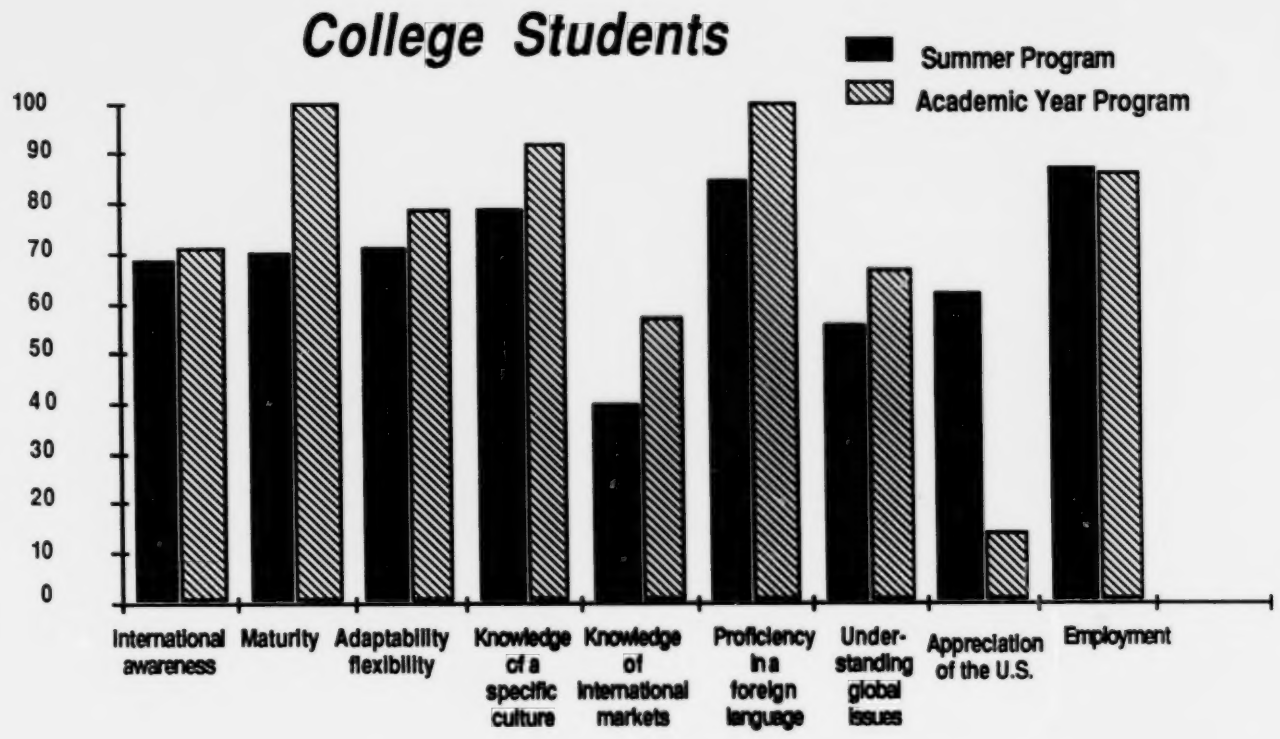
The Impact of International Education on College Acceptance and Career Development

Compilation and distribution

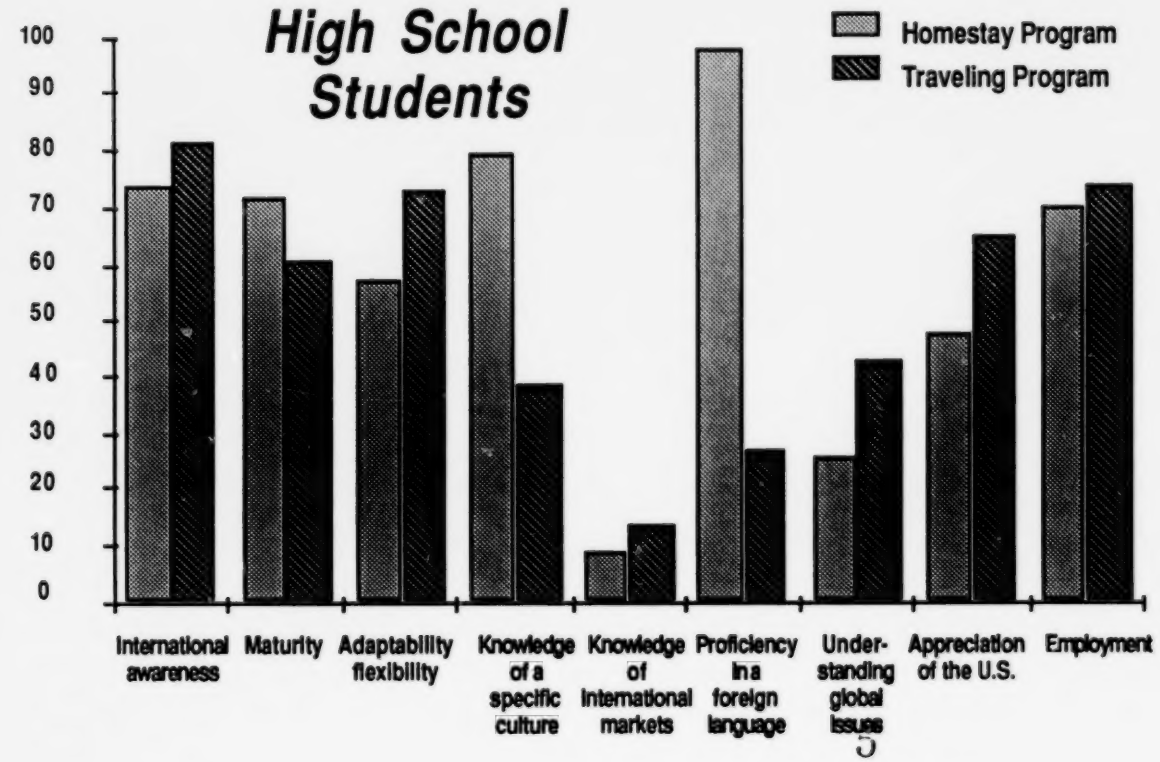
The American Institute For Foreign Study contacted 7,500 participants of high school or college educational travel and study abroad who had studied in the organization's international programs between 1983 and 1988.

The objective of the survey is to achieve a clearer understanding of the impact of study abroad on people who have completed an international learning program. Questions were designed to solicit opinions of past participants of the reactions of college interviewers or employers in regard to this experience and to determine what types of skills participants feel they developed while overseas.

The survey was distributed during November, 1987. At the time of compilation, 714 responses had been received—approximately 10% of the total surveyed. Results have been tallied by program and are summarized in the following pages.



Gains from Overseas Study



High School Educational Travel

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Campus programs enable students to study for three weeks at a foreign school or university and complement classroom learning with visits and sightseeing to major cities and historical and cultural sites. Traveling programs introduce high school youth to one or more foreign countries through an educational tour focusing on the country's history, socio-political structure, art and culture.

Level of education completed by respondents: 91% high school
7% college

College application

78% referred to their educational travel when applying to college.

65% feel the program was an asset to college acceptance.

64% believe their overseas experience contributed to their acceptance at a more competitive college or the college of their choice.

92% indicate college interviewers were somewhat or very impressed with their study abroad.

According to respondents, college admissions departments recognized that the participants had the following skills or traits resulting from their study overseas:

Greater international awareness than other applicants	83%
Greater adaptability than other college applicants	70%
More adventuresome and unique than other applicants	69%
Greater maturity than other college applicants	69%
Seriousness as a student	62%
Knowledge of their intended field of study	40%
Proficiency in a foreign language	29%

89% feel the money spent on educational travel was a worthwhile investment.

Employment

49% of respondents are employed; 25% for the first time.

Sales and service fields employ most of the respondents.

77% indicate educational travel contributed skills useful to employment. Skills cited include:

82% international awareness
86% appreciation of the U.S.
43% understanding of global issues
73% adaptability and flexibility
61% increased maturity
39% knowledge of a specific culture

High School Homestays

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Homestay programs enable students to live with a foreign family as an equal, contributing member. Students develop a deeper insight into a foreign culture through immersion in day-to-day life. Participants in homestay programs live with a foreign family for a summer while attending college courses or for a semester or academic year while attending a local high school.

Level of education completed by respondents: 93% high school
6% college

College application

100% of homestay participants referred to their experience when applying to college.
73% feel it was an asset to the application process.
71% believe the experience contributed to acceptance by the college of their choice.
100% indicate that college interviewers were impressed with the homestay.

Respondents cited the following skills, traits or reasons that a homestay experience facilitated their college acceptance:

92% foreign language ability
71% international awareness
67% greater adaptability than others
62% knowledge of their field of study
81% uniqueness or adventuresome nature
62% greater maturity
43% seriousness as a student

All respondents consider the homestay program a worthwhile investment in their future either for its impact on their college acceptance, future career or personal growth.

Employment

44% of the respondents are employed, 11% for the first time.

70% feel the homestay program contributed skills that will be useful to employment or in the future. Skills or assets include:

Knowledge of a specific culture	80%
International awareness	74%
Increased maturity	72%
Adaptability, flexibility	57%
Heightened appreciation of the U.S.	48%

98% of those respondents who lived in non-English speaking countries improved their foreign language skills significantly.

College Summer Programs

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

College summer programs enable American college youth to study at leading European and Asian universities for a summer semester. Summer programs often are preceded or followed by a period of educational travel to cities and locations of historical or cultural interest.

Level of education completed by respondents:

17% high school
68% college
15% graduate studies

Employment

85% of respondents are employed, 25% for the first time.

Sales, education and service fields employ the greatest percentage of participants.

36% of the respondents hold management or administrative positions.

26% of employed respondents work for a corporation involved actively in international trade or relations. 31% of the employers are somewhat affected or involved in international markets or relations.

85% of respondents feel that study abroad was a worthwhile investment in their future due to its impact on career performance and salary, college performance or for other reasons.

69% of survey respondents felt study abroad contributed skills useful to their career advancement or performance.

Skill developed	% of respondents
Foreign language proficiency	85%
Knowledge of a specific culture	79%
Adaptability, flexibility	71%
Maturity	70%
International awareness	69%
Appreciation of the U.S.	62%
Understanding of global issues	56%
Knowledge of international markets	40%

88% of respondents studying in a non-English speaking country note a significant improvement in their language skill. 50% became fluent or nearly fluent during their summer overseas.

College Academic Year Abroad

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Students may enroll at colleges and universities in Europe and Asia for a full academic year, semester or quarter. Programs are available in languages, arts, communication, business studies, theater and drama, literature, history, political science, psychology, economics and computer science among other disciplines.

Level of education completed by respondents:	43% high school 47% college

Employment

85% of the respondents are presently employed.

66% of employed respondents hold administrative or management positions.

Salaries range as follows:

$20,000 or less per year	50%
$20,000 to $30,000 annually	33%
$30,000 to $50,000 annually	17%

33% of employed respondents travel internationally as part of their job requirements.

50% of respondents work for foreign-owned or multi-national corporations.

86% of the respondents indicate that study abroad was a worthwhile investment in their future.

Respondents consider that study abroad developed the following skills or traits:

Skill	% of respondents
Maturity	100%
Knowledge of a specific culture	92%
Adaptability, flexibility	79%
International awareness	71%
Understanding of global issues	67%
Knowledge of international markets	57%

100% of those respondents who studied in a non-English speaking country improved their language ability significantly.

50% achieved fluency through their study abroad program.

Educational Professionals Concur That Study Abroad is a Valuable Asset

"Students who have participated in a study abroad program seem to express a broadened awareness of another culture and a greater acceptance of others. They have become more critical, in a good way, of stereotypes and images projected by the media because they have learned first hand about another country and its people. If the experience abroad has enabled the student to gain proficiency in a foreign language, it is viewed very favorably in the college application procedure."

—Kitty McCarthy, Assistant Director of Admissions, University of Rochester

"Quality and selective colleges are looking for students who have stretched themselves, taken risks and made an effort to expand their horizons. What better way than by living and learning abroad."

—Howard Greene, Educational Consultant and Author of Scaling the Ivy Wall

"Cornell University has a language requirement . Therefore, students who have used a period of study abroad to become proficient in a foreign language are viewed favorably.... As a university we strongly encourage students to participate in a period of formal study abroad at the college level and feel it's a valuable component to their education."

—Urbain DeWinter, Director of Cornell Abroad, former Director of Admissions, Cornell University College of Arts & Sciences

"A student who has integrated a study broad experience into his or her life, who has reflected upon his experience overseas and made use of it is viewed favorably."

—Jon Reider, Associate Director of Admissions, Stanford University

"It is impressive when someone studies abroad and has developed proficiency in a foreign language. It is more impressive when the student took a strong initiative in his own study abroad program and that the program was challenging or had a significant impact on the student and his outlook toward a country or culture."

—Diane Brunt, Admissions Counselor, Duke University

Students Attest to the Value of Study Abroad

Quotes from survey respondents

"It improved my grades in high school, increased my chances of getting into a good college. I loved my summer abroad...I feel my summer abroad with AIFS had a great influence on me as a person. Not only did I learn the language (Spanish), I felt as if I understood more about the American way of life. The program is fabulous, and I would recommend it to anyone interested in learning and growing."

—Cindy Brown, Dix Hills, NY

"I became so engulfed by the French language and culture, I have decided to major in French in college." —V. VanHorn, Pittsburgh, PA

"Employers are very impressed with a resume sporting a study abroad program. It indicates independence, adaptability, awareness, interest, well-roundedness..."

—Christine Meninno, Saugus, MA

"At many points during the program I realized how lucky I am to live in the U.S....It has also broadened my views on matters such as art, literature and geography."

—Glenn Miller, Riverside, CA

"I think it is very important to live with a family in a foreign speaking nation—this helped immensely in my fluency in the Spanish language...Any time news about Spain is brought up, I am always interested and want to learn everything I can."

—Elizabeth Cohen, Poughkeepsie, NY

"I became more aware of political and social issues in other countries, and I gained a great appreciation for the United States and our values and ideas."

—Kristin Gay, Raleigh, NC

"I stayed with a wonderful family in La Rochelle, France. After my program, I decided the field I would enter would be French and international business."

—Vicky McMackins, Belleville, IL

"Much of what I learned during my study abroad has helped in almost every aspect of my life—in business, socially and intellectually." —Anthony Fiorillo, Paxton, IL

"I would push study abroad programs to high school and college students. The cost is no more than most private colleges...It broadened my view of the world and gave me the opportunity to look at the United States objectively...I hope to pursue a career in film in London where so many fabulous films were created."

—Susannah House, Ft. Worth, TX

"I feel that both (AIFS) programs were extremely enriching and taught me that there is more to this world than the limited horizons of my home town."

—Brian Gee, Cypress, CA

"...a definite broadening experience. I now have several friends in Germany...also, I feel that I have a definite advantage applying to colleges and for jobs."

—D. Martin, Lancaster, OH

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Students Attest to the Value of Study Abroad (con't.)

"My study abroad made me a much more mature and responsible person much earlier than many of my friends." —Liz Smith, Walkerton, IN

"I enjoyed the Comparative Education course. The week we spent with the English family and visited their school was one of the best educational experiences of my teaching career." —Albert Broussard, Beaumont, TX

"Study abroad made me more aware of international issues and foreign cultures. It increased my desire to learn additional languages and travel more often." —Victoria Hilsky, Centerport, NY

"I became aware of the value of money (foreign money) and how it is affected by national/international events (political and economic) and how all that affects my power to buy more or less..." —Deborah Liu, San Francisco, CA

"I think it's more important now than ever before to study abroad as our world shrinks and the ties between countries grow." —Lisa Robertson, Missoula MT

Conclusions and Comments

Survey results clearly indicate that a period of international education contributes skills, traits or experience beneficial both to college acceptance or in career pursuits.

Respondents who had studied abroad at the high school level indicate they believe college admissions staff were impressed favorably with study abroad. The traits respondents suggest aided in impressing interviewers include international awareness and, notably, a greater maturity, adaptability and uniqueness or sense of adventure than other applicants. This suggests that study abroad contributes not only academic or employment skills, but enhances personal growth. In fact, 14% of respondents added a hand-written comment noting that their period of study abroad was a worthwhile investment that paid off many times due to the "personal growth" experienced by the participant.

It is interesting to note that the participants who spent a longer period of study overseas exhibited a lower increase in appreciation for the U.S. than those who were abroad for a shorter time. One possible explanation for this is that students who are more fully immersed in a foreign culture during a year or semester abroad build a fuller acceptance and understanding of a foreign country offsetting their appreciation of the U.S. with appreciation for the new culture.

Also of interest is the surprisingly high international awareness developed by students on programs of shorter duration. Generally, traveling programs or summer study abroad include extensive traveling throughout several countries. This increased exposure to foreign peoples may account for the apparent higher international awareness developed by participants in these programs.

Among participants in college level study abroad, it is significant that half of them are presently employed by a multinational or foreign-owned corporation. Since 33% of them are required to travel internationally in their jobs and 92% of them feel that their knowledge of a specific foreign culture is a beneficial skill, it may be implied that study abroad had a strong impact on the nature of their employment or is useful to the execution of their jobs.

On the whole, 99% of all survey respondents recommend study abroad to high school and college students.

APPENDIX

Survey

CONFIDENTIAL

STUDY ABROAD SURVEY

General:

1. Check the type of AIFS program you participated in:

( ) Educational travel program (high school)
( ) High school homestay abroad
( ) College academic year at foreign university
( ) College semester or quarter at foreign university or school
( ) College summer session
( ) Richmond College, London

Program name:_____ Date:_____

Other AIFS programs:_____ Date:_____

2. Please indicate the level of education completed:

( ) High School
( ) College
( ) Graduate Study
( ) Doctoral Study

About your college or college application procedure:

If you participated in a high school Educational Travel or Homestay Program, please answer questions 3, 4, 5, 6 below. Participants in other programs may skip to question 7.

3. Did you refer to your experience with AIFS when applying to college?
( ) yes ( ) no

4. Do you feel your study abroad experience was an asset to being accepted by college?
( ) yes ( ) no

5. Do you feel your study abroad experience helped you to be accepted to a more competitive college or the college of your choice?
( ) yes ( ) no

If yes, please indicate the reasons you felt your study abroad experience was useful to your college acceptance:

( ) It showed I am a serious student
( ) It showed I am more internationally aware than others
( ) It showed I have greater adaptability than others
( ) It showed I have greater maturity than others
( ) It showed I am an unusual or adventuresome person
( ) It showed I am more knowledgeable about my intended field of study or major
( ) It reveals my language ability (for programs in countries with a foreign language only)

Other:_____
_____
_____
_____

6. During your college application procedure, how did colleges or interviewers react to your AIFS experience:

( ) Very impressed
( ) Somewhat impressed
( ) Not impressed with study abroad experience at all

About your employment and general study abroad experience:

7. Are you presently employed? ( ) yes ( ) no
If yes, is this your first job? ( ) yes ( ) no

8. Which of the following best describes your present employer:

( ) Multinational or foreign-owned corporation
( ) Involved **actively** in international trade, operations or relations
( ) Involved **somewhat** in international trade, operations or relations.
( ) Is in **no way** affected by or involved with countries, markets or suppliers outside the U.S.

9. More specifically, please check the activity which best describes your employer/company's primary function:

( ) Accounting
( ) Advertising/marketing
( ) Agriculture/ecology
( ) Banking/finance
( ) Computer/data management
( ) Construction
( ) Education/child care
( ) Energy/resource management
( ) Engineering
( ) Health care
( ) Import/export
( ) Investment/broker
( ) Journalism/publishing
( ) Manufacturing/production
( ) Science/research
( ) Sales
( ) Service/public service
( ) Travel/entertainment

Other:_____

10. Please check which field best describes your present employment position:

( ) Executive/management/administrative
( ) Operations
( ) Technical/engineering
( ) Secretarial/support
( ) Manual labor

11. Please indicate your present salary range:

( ) Under $20,000/year
( ) $20-30,000/year
( ) $30-50,000/year
( ) $50-75,000/year
( ) Over $75,000/year

12. The money spent on my study abroad program proved to be an investment in my future that has paid off:

( ) Many times due to the positive affect it has had on my employment and income
( ) Many times due to the positive affect it had on my college acceptance
( ) Somewhat
( ) Not at all

13. Is travel a requirement or facet of your employment:
( ) yes ( ) no

If **YES**, do you primarily travel
( ) Within the U.S. only ( ) Internationally
How frequently do you travel on business:
( ) At least 2 weeks per month
( ) At least 2 weeks per quarter
( ) At least 2 weeks per year

14. How often do you travel overseas on travel **unrelated** to business:

( ) More than once a year
( ) Once yearly
( ) Once every two years
( ) At least once in five years
( ) Rarely

15. Do you believe your experience with AIFS helped to contribute skills, experience or an outlook which you have found beneficial during your employment?

( ) yes ( ) No

16. Please check the skills or traits you feel your study abroad experience helped to develop for you:

( ) Increased international awareness
( ) Made me more aware of global issues
( ) Increased adaptability and flexibility
( ) Increased maturity
( ) Greater business knowledge of international markets, methods
( ) Greater knowledge or experience in area of my major
( ) Knowledge of a specific culture and way of life
( ) Greater appreciation of the U.S. and American way of life
( ) Enhanced my marketability to colleges
( ) Enhanced my marketability to employers

Other:_____
_____

17. If you studied in a non-English speaking country, did your study abroad experience improve your language ability:

( ) Became fluent or nearly fluent
( ) Greatly improved
( ) Somewhat improved
( ) No increased ability in the foreign language of country visited
( ) Not applicable

18. If you had the opportunity to participate in a study abroad program again, you would:
( ) Go earlier
( ) Stay longer
( ) Go more than once to the same destination
( ) Go on several different programs
Other:_____

19. Would you recommend educational travel and exchange to high school or college students?

( ) yes ( ) no

Optional comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you feel study abroad changed your life?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Optional:

Name:_____

Address:_____

City:_____State:_____Zip:_____

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